

Garza House
1009 East 13th Street
Brownsville
Cameron County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3280

HABS
TEX,
31-BROWN,
11-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20243

GARZA HOUSE

HABS TEX, 31-BROWN, 11-

Location: 1009 East 13th Street, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas.

Present Owner: Jaime and Angelica Martinez

Present Occupant: Not known.

Present Use: Rental property.

Significance: Built before 1894, 1009 East 13th Street resembles creole cottages in New Orleans which were once closely associated with Brownsville through shipping. The steeply pitched roof punctuated by dormers and canted over a porch as well as the interior chimney are characteristic of creole cottages in New Orleans in the early 1800s.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The house appears on the 1894 Sanborn Map (the earliest map of the area in which the house is located.) According to the Deed Records, a dwelling was on Lot 13 in 1867, but it is unlikely that this refers to the present structure.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: 1009 East 13th Street, the Garza House, is located on the northeastern portion of Block 120, Lots 13 and 14 of the Original Townsite of Brownsville. The front portion of the house is located on Lot 14. References to the title of these lots are found in the Cameron County Clerk's Office, in Brownsville, Texas, and were traced by Pat Footer of the Brownsville Historical Association.

Lot 13

- 1867 Mortgage Lien dated September 30, 1867, recorded in Supplement B, page 111. Charles Nebitt granted a Mortgage Lien to J. C. Richard. In condition of the mortgage agreement the record shows that Richard was indebted to Nebitt--"indebted to grantee in sum of \$75 and for which Richard "do in 3 equal installments of \$25 each due 20, 40, and 60 days from date and do give lien upon my dwelling house and all improvements belonging to me and situated on Lot 13, Block 120."
- 1868 Sheriff's Deed dated February 11, 1868, recorded in Supplement B, pages 177-178, shows that Samuel Belden acquired Lot 13 from the Cameron County sheriff for \$70.

- 1885 Warranty Deed dated September 1, 1885, recorded in Supplement G, pages 337-338. Thomas Carson sold Lot 13 to Refugia S. de Marquez for \$80. (Thomas Carson and Samuel Belden were both agents for the Stillman interests in Brownsville which eventually became the New York Brownsville Improvement Company.)
- 1886 Warranty Deed dated December 18, 1886, recorded in Supplement G, pages 422-423. The New York Brownsville Improvement Company sold Lot 13 to Refugia de Marquez for \$150.
- 1889 Warranty Deed dated June 27, 1889, recorded in Supplement H, pages 24-25. Caledonio Garza bought Lot 13 from Refugia de Marquez for \$355 Mexican.

Lot 14

- 1868 Warranty Deed with Vendor's Lend dated February 1, 1868, recorded in Supplement B, pages 168-169. Dolores Rodriguez bought Lot 14 from Charles Stillman by agents Samuel Belden and W. G. Hale for \$150 and \$50 due in six months.
- 1886 Warranty Deed dated March 17, 1886, recorded in Supplement G, pages 336-337. Caledonio Garza bought Lot 14 from Dolores Rodriguez for \$600.

Lots 13 and 14 remained in the Garza family until 1941.

- 1941 Warranty Deed recorded October 29, 1941, in Volume 307, pages 204-206. The Estate of Fidela Garza de Garza (widow of Caledonio Garza) deeded Lots 13 and 14 to the Home Owner Loan Corporation.
- 1942 Warranty Deed dated September 9, 1942, recorded in Volume 311, page 387 and following. Manuela Longoria acquired Lots 13 and 14 from the Home Owners Loan Corporation.
- 1974 Warranty Deeds dated July 22, 1974, and August 24, 1974, recorded in Volume 1002, pages 698-704. Pedro Longoria et al., Elena O'Leary et al., and the Estate of Evangelina Vera sold Lots 13 and 14 to Jaime and Angelica Martinez.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Unknown.

5. Original plan and construction: The earliest Sanborn Map of Block 120 is the 1894 Map which shows the house facing southeast on East 13th Street. The house has a front porch and a dogleg extending northwest from the northern corner of the house. It is designated a one-story dwelling in 1894, and also in 1906, on a later map.

6. Additions and alterations: The house does not appear to be altered on the 1906 Sanborn Map, but the 1914 Sanborn Map shows that the front porch has been extended around the southwestern side of the house. By this date the house is listed as 1 and 1/2 stories.

The porch on the southwestern side of the house has since been enclosed; the lattice work of that porch is still visible. A toilet is located within this enclosure. Indoor plumbing is currently being added to the building (1977).

Changes and alterations shown on the Sanborn Maps are not in evidence in the physical fabric of the house. According to John White, Project Supervisor, neither the roof nor the front porch show any sign of having been altered. This suggests that both the roof and the porch may have been completely replaced at one point.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

1. It is thought that Caledonia Garza may have been the builder of the house. In 1892 his property in Brownsville was assessed at \$5,868. (Chatfield, p. 25.)

It is difficult to date 1009 E. 13th Street because of the number of structures on lots 13 and 14, and because of the lack of supporting information in the Deed Records. The main portion of the house is located at the eastern corner of Lot 14 with the rear dogleg extending into Lot 13. It is tempting to state that the house was built by Caledonia Garza around 1890, when he consolidated the two lots. However, the usual price for an unimproved lot in the Original Townsite of Brownsville was \$150-\$200 in the nineteenth century. Lot 13 was sold to Garza for \$355 Mexican money in 1889 and Lot 14 was sold to him for \$600. It is possible that other commercial buildings on the property (shown on the 1894 Sanborn Map) account for the added value, but this cannot be stated with any certainty. At any rate, the house was constructed by 1894, when it appears on the Sanborn Map of that year.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Brownsville Historical Survey Files in the City Planning Office,
Brownsville, Texas.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Chatfield, W. H. The Twin Cities of the Border and the Country of the Lower Rio Grande. Originally published in 1893, reprinted in 1959 by the Harbert Davenport Memorial Fund, the Brownsville Historical Association, and the Lower Rio Grande Valley Historical Society.

Sanborn Maps of Brownsville, Texas, dated 1894, 1906, and 1914, available at the Hunter Room of the Brownsville City-College Library, Brownsville, Texas, and at the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

Prepared by: Betty Bird
University of Virginia
Project Historian
1977

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is an example of a modest frame residence built in Brownsville in the late nineteenth century.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: This L-shaped, one and one-half story house, with a five-bay front, is approximately fifty-two feet across the front, by thirty-two feet deep, with a twenty-four feet by thirty-six feet ell or wing.
2. Foundation: Foundations are brick throughout.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: Wood siding appears on most of the house, with board-and-batten siding on the northwest and northeast sides.
4. Structural system, framing: Construction is wood frame throughout.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: There is a porch extending across the principal southeast facade. It has a concrete floor and foundation, a wood ceiling, a pent roof with hipped ends covered with asphalt shingles, and six simple wood posts. There is one concrete set of steps at each of three entrances across the porch.
6. Chimneys: There is a large brick chimney on the front side of the gable, just by-passing a dormer on the northeast end of the house. There are several projecting brick courses at the chimney cap.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The principal entrance into the original house is in the center bay. This doorway leads into the stair-hall. The wide doorway has a wooden panel door with sidelight on each side. The lower panel of the door has carvings in it, and the large top glass panel is surrounded by engaged half-

spindles, a carved head, and a water table at the sill of the glass. There is a wood panel beneath each side light composed of a square panel above a rectangular one. At the head of the doorway is a three-panel, glass transom with segmental arched top. The wooden surround extends across the head horizontally. There is a wood sill, wood threshold, and a wood-framed screen door.

There are two other doorways on the principal facade that have been installed in floor-to-ceiling window openings. The wood panel doors, with one-light glass transom, have wood surrounds, wood sill and threshold. Numerous doors on the rear are of wood paneling and solid flush wood. All have wood surrounds.

- b. Windows and shutters: Wooden windows on the first floor and in second-floor attic rooms have six-over-six light, single-hung sashes, wood surrounds, and sills, and protective window bars. Some first-floor windows have wood louvre shutters. Windows across the front and openings inside to the closed-in porch were formerly floor-to-ceiling, double-hung windows that extended up into the head. This is evidenced by the metal pulleys and head slot still existing in the opening.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The gable roof, with hipped end on the southwest, covering the enclosed porch, is covered with wood shingles.
- b. Cornice, eaves: There is an open cornice, except at porches, which have boxed cornices.
- c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: There is a dormer on the southwest end of the house, two single dormers across the front near each end, and a dormer in the center at the rear. Each has wood siding walls and gabled roof with wood shingles. There is one window in each dormer ~~except~~ the one on the rear, which has a double window.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: The principal entrance, in the center of the main or southeast facade, opens into a stair hall. The rear of the hall has been walled in. The stair leads to a second-floor apartment. On each side of the center entrance are entrances to apartments. The apartment on the southwest has a room on the front, with a window to the right of a door which opens to the front porch. A doorway to the stair hall on the northeast has been blocked up.

These openings were formerly full-length, floor-to-ceiling windows, leading to a small room that is part of the enclosed porch. An opening on the northwest of this room leads into another small room, with bath, that is part of the enclosed porch. An opening leads back into a room on the rear of the main house. This room has an opening in the center of the northwest wall leading to the exterior. An opening on the northeast wall, that is blocked up, leads to the walled-in part of the stairhall, which is now part of the northeast apartment. The northeast apartment is similar to the one on the southwest. The front room has a large projecting fireplace on the southwest wall. The large, square brick chimney, which was exposed in the room, extends up from the wood-paneled fireplace. The wood paneling extends around three sides of the fireplace. A wood mantelshelf extends around three sides, and there is a concrete hearth.

The rear wing is divided into two apartments.

- b. Second floor: The second-floor attic has three rooms across the length of the house. The stair hall leads directly into this apartment.
- 2. Stairway: The wooden dog-leg, open-string stairway leads up to the second floor. At the landing is a half-wall with wooden handrail on top. The simple wooden balustrade extends from a large newel at the first floor, curves at the landing, and continuing to a newel at the second floor, there turns and ends at the wall. All the wood has been painted. A wooden band extends around the stairwell at the second-floor level.
- 3. Flooring: Flooring is wood throughout, in some rooms covered with linoleum and vinyl asbestos tile.
- 4. Walls and ceiling finish: Some rooms have wood wall paneling and wood ceilings with cornice molding. Many have been covered with gypsum board, and painted. The ceilings on the second floor have sloping sides.
- 5. Doorways and doors: Wood panel doors have wood surrounds. The trim on the doors and windows on the first floor, in the front part of the house, have bull's eye blocks at the head.
- 6. Mechanical:
 - a. Heating: Heating is by natural gas space heaters.
 - b. Lighting: Modern lighting fixtures.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces southeast in the center of the block, next to the alley on the northeast. There is commercial property across the street facing the house, and residential property around the other sides. The house sits very close to the street, with a concrete sidewalk across the front. There is a wire fence extending across the rear of the property and along the alley side, very close to the house. The rear yard has grass and two large trees.

Prepared by: John P. White
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1977

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

At the suggestion of a national preservation consultant, Ellen Beasley, this project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, in cooperation with the Brownsville Historical Association and the Brownsville City Planning Department. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, the project was completed during the summer of 1977 at the Historic American Buildings Survey field office, Brownsville, Texas, by John P. White (Associate Professor, Texas Technological University) Project Supervisor; Betty Bird (University of Virginia) Project Historian; and Student Assistant Architects Scott Deneroff (University of Maryland), Susan Dornbusch (University of Virginia), Matthew Lowry (University of Pennsylvania), Eduardo Luaces (University of Florida), and Alan Willig (the City College of the City University of New York). Special assistance and support were provided to the HABS team by Mrs. Mary Simmons, Mrs. Sally Fleming, Miss Theresa Champion, and Mr. Calvin Walker of the Brownsville Historical Association; and by Mr. Mario Moreno, Mr. Richard Waldman, Mrs. Graciela Salinas, and Mr. Larry Brown of the Brownsville City Planning Department. Archival photographs of the project were made in February 1979 by Bill Engdahl, of Hedrich-Blessing, Chicago, Illinois. Editing and final preparation of the documentation was carried out in the HABS Washington office by Lucy Pope Wheeler of the HABS professional staff.